

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing data items stored in a database to authorised users of a database, comprising the steps of:

attaching a wrapper to at least some of the data items, the wrapper including consensus related information; and

passing the data items to a user for viewing.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the wrapper includes an indication of whether the data items can be displayed to other users.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the indication comprises a consent flag.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the consent flag has a first state in which the data item can be viewed by other users, a second state in which the data item cannot be viewed by other users, and a default state in which the data item can be viewed by other users only if it is not defined as sensitive data.

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5. A method according to claim 1, in which the wrapper includes an indication of when the data item was last correct, the method further comprising the steps of:

automatically updating the indication of when the data was last correct when the user to whom the data item relates views the data item.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the wrapper further includes an indication of when and by whom the data item was changed.

7. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of updating an audit log when the data item or any data in the wrapper relating to the data item is changed.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the wrapper indicates a checksum, further comprising the steps of:

calculating a value of the checksum when a data item is requested from the database;

comparing the calculated value with the checksum in the wrapper; and

forwarding the data item to the user only if the calculated checksum agrees with the checksum in the wrapper.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein a flag is set for each user indicating whether they have accepted a

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current rule set governing access to the database, and access to the database is denied if the rule set is not accepted.

10. A method according to claim 1, comprising the steps of automatically notifying an administrator if a user makes a change to a data item related to the user.

11. A method of updating information relating to an entry in a database having a plurality of data items related to data subjects, the information including an indication of when the data related to a given data subject was last verified as correct by that data subject, comprising the step of:

updating the information automatically when the data subject to whom the data item relates views the data item.

12. A computer program product residing in a computer readable storage medium for providing data items stored in a database to authorized users of the database, comprising instructions for causing a computer to:

attach a wrapper to at least some of the data items, the wrapper including consensus related information; and

pass the data items to a user for viewing.

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13. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein the wrapper includes an indication of whether the data items can be displayed to other users.

14. The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the indication comprises a consent flag.

15. The computer program product of claim 14, wherein the consent flag has a first state in which the data item can be viewed by other users, a second state in which the data item cannot be viewed by other users, and a default state in which the data item can be view by other users only if it is not defined as sensitive data.

16. The computer program product of claim 1, in which the wrapper includes an indication of when the data item was last correct, further comprising instructions to cause a computer to automatically update the indication of when the data was last correct when the user to whom the data item relates views the data item.

17. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the wrapper further includes an indication of when and by whom the data item was changed.

18. The computer program product of claim 1, further comprising instructions for causing a computer to update an audit log when the data item or any data in the wrapper relating to the data item is changed.

19. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the wrapper indicates a checksum, further comprising instructions for causing a computer to calculate a value of the checksum when a data item is requested from the database, compare the calculated value with the checksum in the wrapper, and forward the data item to the user only if the calculated checksum agrees with the checksum in the wrapper.

20. The computer program product of claim 1, further comprising instructions for causing a computer to set a flag for each user indicating whether they have accepted a current rule set governing access to the database, and deny access to the database if the rule set is not accepted.

21. The computer program product of claim 1, further comprising instructions for causing a computer to automatically notify an administrator if a user makes a change to a data item related to the user.

22. A computer program product residing on a computer readable storage medium for updating information relating to an entry in a database having a plurality of data items related to data subjects, the information including an indication of when the data related to a given data subject was last verified as correct by that data subject, comprising instructions for causing a computer to update the information automatically when the data subject to whom the data item relates views the data item.

23. A consensus protected database, comprising:

- a database for storing data items relating to data subjects;
- a store for storing wrappers for attachment to selected data items, said wrappers each including consensual related information for said data item; and
- an application server for passing the data items to database users for viewing.

24. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said database is located at a database server and said store is located at a consensus server.

25. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said application server comprises a rules table for applying flag rules and consensus rules to data items and system users respectively.

26. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said wrapper comprises a plurality of data fields including a consent flag indicating whether said data item can be viewed by other database users.

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27. A consensus protected database according to claim 26, wherein said consent flag has a first state indicating to the application server that said data item can be viewed, a second state indicating to said application server that said data item cannot be viewed, and a third default state in which said data item can be viewed only if said data item is not defined as sensitive data.

28. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said wrapper comprises fields indicating when said data item was last correct, and said application server includes an updating function for updating said data last correct field when a data subject to whom a data item relates views that data item.

29. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said wrapper comprises fields indicating when and by whom said data item was changed.

30. A consensus protected database according to claim 24, wherein said wrapper includes a checksum field which stores a checksum based on said content of said wrapper fields, said consensus server further comprising means for generating a fresh checksum when said data item is requested by said application server, for checking said fresh checksum with said checksum in said wrapper field and for passing said data item to said application server only if said fresh checksum corresponds to the checksum in said wrapper.

31. A consensus protected database according to claim 25, wherein said application server comprises a checker for checking the status of a business rule flag and for displaying business rules to said user if said business rule flag indicates that said rules have not been accepted by said user.

32. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein said database further comprises:
an audit log for logging all updates to data items and/or wrappers.

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33. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, comprising:

a web server for providing access to users across the Internet.

34. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, wherein the users comprise a data controller and a plurality of data subjects.

35. A consensus protected database according to claim 23, comprising an automatic notifier for automatically notifying an administrator if a user makes a change to a data item related to said user.

36. Apparatus for updating information relating to an entry in a database having a plurality of data items related to data subjects, said information including an indication of when said data related to a given data subject was last verified as correct by that data subject, comprising:

an automatic information updater for updating the information automatically when said data subject to whom said data item relates views the data item.

37. A method providing data items stored in a database to authorized users of the database, comprising the steps of:

attaching a wrapper to at least some of the data items, the wrapper including consensus related information;

passing the data items to a user for viewing;

wherein the wrapper includes an indication of when the data was last correct; and

automatically updating the indication of when the data was last correct when the user to whom the data item relates views the data item.

38. A consensus protected database, comprising:

a database for storing data items relating to data subjects;

a store for storing wrappers for attachment to selected data items, the wrappers each including consensual related information for the data item and comprising fields indicating when said data item was last correct;

an application server for passing said data items to database users for viewing;

wherein said application server comprises an updating function for updating said data last correct field when a data subject to whom a data item relates views that data item.

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39. A consensus protected database, comprising:

 a database server having a database for storing data items relating to data subjects;

 a consensus server having a store for storing wrappers for attachment to selected data items, said wrappers each including consensual related information for said data item and a checksum field which stores a checksum based on the content of said wrapper fields;

 and an application server for passing said data items to database users for viewing;

 wherein said consensus server further comprises a checksum generator for generating a fresh checksum when a data item is requested by said application server, for checking said fresh checksum with said checksum in said wrapper checksum field and for passing said data item to said application server only if said fresh checksum corresponds to said checksum in said wrapper.

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40. A method of providing data items stored in a database to authorized users of a database, comprising the steps of:

attaching a wrapper to at least some of the data items, the wrapper including consensus related information and containing a checksum;

calculating a value of the checksum when a data item is requested from the database;

comparing the calculated value with the checksum in the wrapper; and

forwarding the data item to the user only if the calculated checksum agrees with the checksum in the wrapper.

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